

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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R 221855Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4413
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN UNN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2446

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR US
SUBJECT: SOVIET LEADERSHIP: HEALTH, BUST FOR KOSYGIN, OTHER TIDBITS

REF: (A) 76 MOSCOW 15685, (B) 76 MOSCOW 7527

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. BREZHNEV DID NOT APPEAR TO BE IN TOP
SHAPE DURING HIS MOST RECENT TELEVISION APPEARANCE FEB 17.
KOSYGIN SEEMS FULLY RECOVERED FROM HIS MYSTERIOUS INDISPOSITION
LAST SUMMER, ALTHOUGH THE PROTOCOL AND MEDIA ASPECTS
OF HIS FEB 21 BUST UNVEILING SUGGEST THAT HIS CURRENT
POLITICAL STANDING IS NO BETTER THAN THAT OF PODGORNY AND
SUSLOV AND FAR BELOW THAT OF BREZHNEV. ACCORDING TO ONE
RUMOR, GROMYKO RECENTLY SUFFERED A STROKE; THE MFA CLAIMS
HE IS MERELY ON LEAVE. THE FRG EMBASSY IS UNIMPRESSED
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WITH TRADE UNION CHAIRMAN SHIBAYEV. END SUMMARY.

2. BREZHNEV'S FEB 17 MEETING WITH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
PRESIDENTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE WAS SHOWN ON SOVIET TELEVISION
THAT EVENING. BREZHNEV DID NOT APPEAR TO BE IN TOP FORM:
HE LOOKED TIRED, AND THERE SEEMED TO BE MORE THAN THE
USUAL AMOUNT OF LOOSE FLESH BELOW HIS JAWBONE. HIS VOICE

WAS NOT CARRIED; AN OFF-CAMERA ANNOUNCER READ A SUMMARY OF HIS SPEECH WHILE SILENT FOOTAGE OF BREZHNEV'S ADDRESS WAS SHOWN.

3. THE SOVIET COSMONAUTS CURRENTLY IN ORBIT HAVE FOUND A NEW WAY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CULT OF BREZHNEV. DURING THE DAILY TELECASTS FROM THE SPACE CAPSULE THEY HAVE POSITIONED THEMSELVES IN FRONT OF A LARGE PHOTOGRAPH OF LEONID I'lich, WHICH IS TAPED TO A BULKHEAD.

4. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR, WHO ACCOMPANIED ROLLSY ROYCE OFFICIAL SIR JOHN RUSSELL ON A CALL UPON KOSYGIN FEB 11, TELLS US THAT KOSYGIN SEEMED IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AND APPEARED VIGOROUS. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT IF KOSYGIN SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK OR STROKE LAST SUMMER, HE NOW SEEMS TO HAVE RECOVERED FULLY.

5. JUDGING FROM FEB 22 MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE UNVEILING OF KOSYGIN'S BRONZ BUST, KOSYGIN'S POLITICAL HEALTH MAY BE LESS ROBUST THAN HISPHYSICAL HEALTH. THE FEB 21 UNVEILING COINCIDED WITH KOSYGIN'S BIRTHDAY, ALTHOUGH THE BRIEF TASS ITEM ON THE EVENT DID NOTMENTION THAT FACT. THE TASS ACCOUNT WAS IN THE SAME FORMAT, AND ABOUT THE SAME LENGTH, AS THE CORRESPONDING ITEMS ON THE PODGORNY AND SUSLOV BUSTS UNVEILED ON SEPT 25 AND OCT 3 LAST YEAR. IN CONTRAST TO THE UNVEILING CEREMONIES FOR PODGORNY AND SUSLOV, NO RANKING PARTY OFFICIAL WAS IDENTIFIED AS BEING PRESENT FOR THE KOSYGIN CEREMONY. THE TASS ACCOUNT NOTED ONLY THAT OBKOM BUREAU MEMBERS AND GORKOM SECRETARIES

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(UNNAMED) WERE ON HAND. THE LOCAL RAYKOM PARTY BOSS OPENED THE FESTIVITIES FOR PODGORNY AND SUSLOV BUSTS; THE OBKOM FIRST SECRETARY WAS PRESENT BUT DID NOT SPEAK AT THE PODGORNY CEREMONY, WHILE THE OBKOM FIRST SECRETARY DID SPEAK DURING THE SUSLOV CEREMONY. ISOKOL CHAIRMAN ZYAKOV WAS THE ONLY SENIOR LENINGRAD OFFICIAL WHO SPOKE AT THE KOSYGIN UNVEILING; OBKOM PARTY BOSS ROMANOV WAS ELSEWHERE.

6. WE HAVE HEARD CONFLICTING RUMORS CONCERNING GROMYKO. DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF WORLD ECONOMICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INOZEMSTEV REPORTEDLY TOLD A VISITING WEST GERMAN SCHOLAR THAT GROMYKO "WAS ILL." THE FRG AMBASSADORNOTED AT THE QUADRIpartite MEETING FEB 21 THAT HE HAD HEARD FROM A GOOD SOURCE (CONCEIVABLY THE SAME SCHOLAR) THAT GROMYKO HAD SUFFERED A STROKE, WAS CONFINED TO HIS DACHA AND WAS NOT PERMITTED TO WORK. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE INDIAN EMBASSY WAS TOLD -- IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT VISIT OF INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA--THAT GROMYKO WAS ON LEAVE (THE

EXPLANATION WAS THAT POLITBURO MEMBERS ARE ENTITLED TO TWO MONTHS OF VACATION ANNUALLY, ONE IN THE SUMMER AND ONE IN THE WINTER, AND GROMYKO WAS CURRENTLY TAKING HIS WINTER MONTH). SIMILARLY, A MFA PROTOCOL OFFICIAL RECENTLY TOLD US THAT GROMYKO WAS "ON LEAVE".

7. FINALLY, A SENIOR FRG EMBASSY OFFICER RECENTLY MET WITH TRADE UNION CHIEF SHIBAYEV AND DESCRIBED HIM TO US AS A "A COMPLETE COD."

8. COMMENT. THE CLEAR DOWNPLAYING OF CPSU REPRESENTATION AT THE KOSYGIN BUST CEREMONY STRIKES US AS A POSSIBLE CONTINUATION OF THE SECOND CLASS TREATMENT ACCORDED KOSYGIN AT THE 25TH CONGRESS (E.G., LIMITED MEDIA COVERAGE FOR HIS MAJOR ADDRESS, BREZHNEV ABSENT WHILE KOSYGIN WAS SPEAKING). IT ALSO RECALLS THE DISTANCING BETWEEN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT APPARATUSES (WITH CRITICISM
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DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT THE LATTER) THAT CHARACTERIZED MANY SPEECHES DURING THE CONGRESS. IN ANY CASE, THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE MASSIVE MEDIA TREATMENT OF BREZHNEV'S MAY 8 BUST UNVEILING (LIVE TELEVISION, EXTENSIVE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE, INCLUDING A REPLAY OF SHCHERBITSKIY'S ADDRESS, ETC). AND THE MODEST TASS ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PODGORNYY, SUSLOV AND KOSYGIN INDICATED HOW FAR THE CULT OF BREZHNEV HAS DEVELOPED IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS.
TOON

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Message Attributes

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